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Notes on two Sources for Burns Biography

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Notes on two Sources for Burns Biography

1. *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford, 1968, presents a selection of contemporary impressions of Burns, III, 1534-1547. Number IX of these impressions, quoted from *Burns as Others saw him*, ed. W. L. Renwick, 1959, for the Saltire Society, gives an account by Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges of a visit he paid Burns at Ellisland. Renwick reports that the reminiscence had been "published in the Metropolitan Magazine," and had been reprinted "by Chambers, Vol. III." But a search through the indices of the *Metropolitan Magazine*, both in person at Yale's Sterling Library, and through the kindness of librarians at the British Museum and the Library Company of Philadelphia, has revealed no such item.

The account does appear in Robert Chambers' 1851 edition of *The Life and Works of Robert Burns* (Egerer 540), and is in III, 143-44 of a New York edition of 1854 by Harper and Brothers, now before me. But the British Museum confirms that the account was not included in the 1856 Chambers (Egerer 594); nor is it in an 1880 edition in my possession. And it does not appear in the Wallace revision of 1896 (Egerer 893). Can anyone supply authentication of the account published by Chambers, or must it be considered a hoax which he discovered promptly and silently discarded?

2. *The Burns Chronicle*, 1973, p. 57n, mentions "a manuscript of John DeLancey Ferguson composed of his quotations from and notes upon the unedited Syme-Cunningham correspondence." Professor Ferguson never saw the original correspondence. This manuscript was based on a transcript in my Cornell University doctoral dissertation, *Robert Burns as Seen by his Contemporaries*, 1935, which was lent to professor Ferguson while he was preparing *Pride and Passion* (New York, 1939), and was handsomely acknowledged by him on page X of his Preface. See also *Robert Burns: The Man and the Poet*, note for p. 365, on pp. 480-81.

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